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What are behavioral addictions?

This isn't a great term
 Significant stigma attached to word *addiction*
 Not a clinical term
 Can have a problem without being an "addict"
 Gives teens an opt-out

MOST COMMON CURRENTLY
Among David's Mostly Cis-Male Clients
 Pornography
 YouTube
 Fast Food
 Gaming

OTHER EXAMPLES
 Social Media
 Gambling
 Shopping
 Sex
 Exercise
 Risky Behaviors

AND THEN THERE'S...
 Sites like OnlyFans
 Combines sex, porn & social media

Is substance use a BA?

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PREVALENCE

- Lack of clear definition makes it difficult to accurately identify prevalence
- Wildly varying statistics, some clearly biased or intentionally deceptive
- Tech-based BAs are relatively new & quickly evolving
- Tech-based BAs have increased dramatically since COVID Why?

DAVID'S VERY INFORMAL META-ANALYSIS
10-12% of US teens have BAs

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DIAGNOSTIC CODES

Gambling Disorders DSM-5-TR ICD-10 & ICD-11	Various specific diagnoses, all identifying persistent and problematic gambling behavior leading to significant distress or impairment
Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder ICD-11	A persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges resulting in repetitive sexual behavior
Gaming Disorder ICD-11	Significantly impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming, and continuation despite negative consequences
Impulse Control Disorders DSM-5-TR ICD-10 & ICD-11	Various specific diagnoses, all identifying difficulty controlling impulses

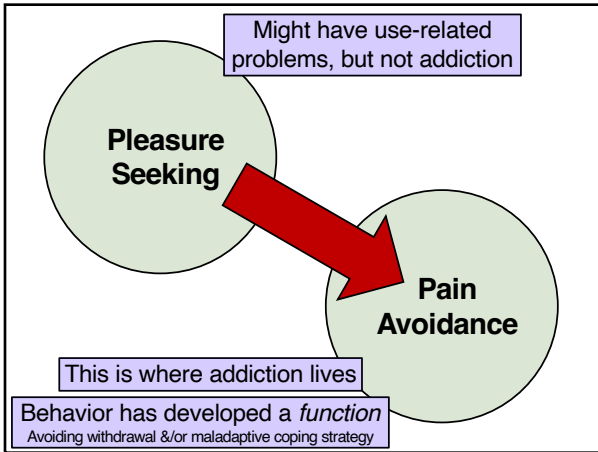
US insurance companies
don't pay for ICD-11 codes

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STAGES OF USE



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Let's Talk About Dopamine

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DEFINING DOPAMINE

Neurochemical released when we engage in behaviors that promote survival of the individual &/or survival of the species
Or replicates these behaviors

Provides "feel good" reward

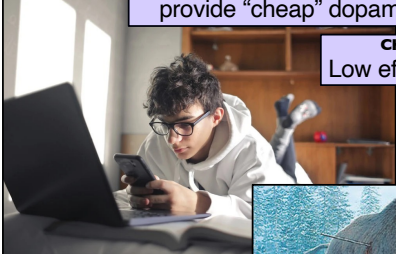
Also provides motivation to seek additional reward through engaging in more of the *same* behavior

Some neuroscientists now think dopamine is more about motivation than reward


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Potentially addictive behaviors provide "cheap" dopamine

CHEAP DOPAMINE
Low effort + high reward



EARNED DOPAMINE
Requires effort or risk



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1: Cheap dopamine doesn't last long, resulting in dopamine crashes & increased dopamine-seeking behaviors

2: This increased release of dopamine results in the brain shutting off dopamine receptors

3: This leads to more dopamine crashes, & often increased risk taking or impulsive behaviors

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But Wait, There's More...

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DESIGNED FOR COMPULSIVITY

Fast food is designed for compulsivity in an entirely different way

EXAMPLES
 Videogames
 Gambling
 Social Media
 Pokémon Cards

Variable ratio reinforcement
 Trading cards, loot boxes, scratch tickets, slots

A FEW OTHER DESIGN CHOICES
 Getting "close" to winning
 Multi-sensory, immersive environments
 In-game rewards, power ups & likes
 Fast paced play

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GENETIC CONSIDERATIONS

There is likely a genetic predisposition for BAs

The Dopamine Double Whammy

Individuals who engage in BAs *might* produce less dopamine than most people

OTHER POSSIBLE FACTORS
 Inheritable personality traits
 Epigenetic vulnerabilities

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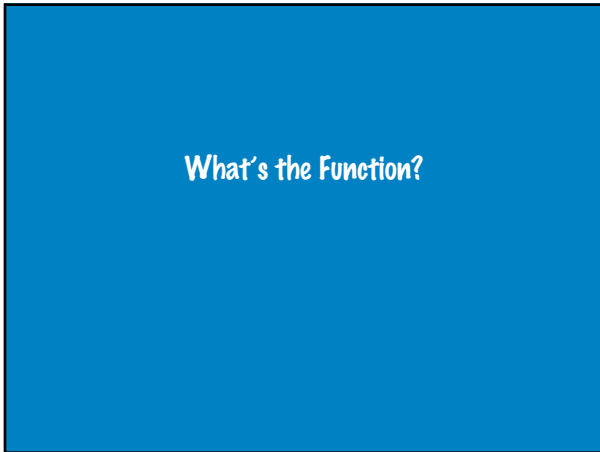
REPLICATES SURVIVAL NEEDS

EXAMPLES
 Sex
 Porn
 Food
 Fast Food
 Shopping

"A zombie apocalypse probably isn't gonna happen, but I'll be ready if it does. And, I guess that makes me feel safer."
Nate, former client

Behaviors that replicate survival needs lead to especially big dopamine bursts

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UNPACKING FUNCTION

- Acknowledging the function isn't the same as endorsing it
- A strong function makes a behavior *seem* like a survival need
- People will *always* defend their perceived survival needs
- If we don't address function, lasting change is unlikely

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Part Two:
**PROBLEMATIC
 PORNOGRAPHY
 USE**

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BEFORE WE START

- Teens view porn
- Some people have strong opinions about this
- We can't talk about porn without acknowledging sex & masturbation
- We can't have clinically useful conversations if policing language
- It's not our job to judge

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A FEW STATISTICS

- About 70% of US teens have been exposed to online porn
- Intentional about 20-40%
- Unintentional about 30-50%
- Male teens more likely to view porn
- Data from one study of online viewing: 66% of male teens, 39% of female teens
- Use increased during COVID

(Jhe, Addison, Lin & Pluhar, 2023)

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Limited scientifically valid data about effects of porn on teens

Most negative outcomes data is based on corollaries or biases
(Jhe, et all, 2022)

Example: Adolescents who view porn become sexually aggressive

LEGITIMATE CONCERNS
Unrealistic perspectives on sex & body image
The “numbing of sexuality”
The ethics of porn
Exacerbates mental health concerns
Potential for addiction

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SUD CRITERIA (DSM-5-TR)

Physical Dependence	Impaired Control	Social Problems	Risky Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdrawal Tolerance Cravings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using larger amount or more often than intended Unable to stop or cut down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglecting responsibilities & relationships Giving up activities that used to be important Failure to complete tasks at home, work or school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using in risky situations Continued use despite known problems

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APPLYING SUD CRITERIA

<p>Withdrawal <i>Dopamine crash; Increase in MH symptoms; Irritability</i></p>	<p>Impaired Control <i>Viewing longer than intended; Overspending</i></p>
<p>Tolerance <i>Less vanilla; Viewing & masturbation becomes uncoupled</i></p>	<p>Social Problems <i>SO doesn't like it; Skipping social activities to view</i></p>
<p>Cravings <i>Strong urges to view; Decreased ability to resist this urge</i></p>	<p>Risky Behaviors <i>Viewing in inappropriate settings</i></p>

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Let's Talk About Gooning

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DEFINING GOONING

- **Engaging in extended, often compulsive masturbation while watching porn**
- **Typically includes sustained edging**
- **Often gooners goon in online videochats**
At least some participants on camera; Typically hyper-cut porn videos being played; Most goon sites are self-defined as straight spaces
- **Some gooners have goon caves**
May include multiple monitors, porn on walls, sex aids, etc
- **Meta-humiliation**
Part of the appeal is the embarrassment of being a "pathetic gooner"

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GOONER CHARACTERISTICS
 Most likely male
 Late teens to upper twenties
 Early onset porn use
 Self-aware & self-deprecating

Performative nihilism

"I wonder if those guys online are total edgelords & gooning is actually a weird game for them, or if they're really that far gone... Maybe it doesn't matter."
Michael, self-declared gooner

CASE STUDY
Michael the Pathetic Gooner

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WHAT DOESN'T HELP
 Telling teens what their doing is "bad"
 Forcing compliance
 Focusing on abstinence
 Rushing to problem solving

WHAT DOES HELP
 Cultivating therapeutic alliance
 Addressing mental health concerns
 Honest conversations about real concerns
 Meeting them where they're at

These are essential components for treating all BAs in teens

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Part Three:
**ADDRESSING
 BEHAVIORAL
 ADDICTIONS**

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Build Alliance

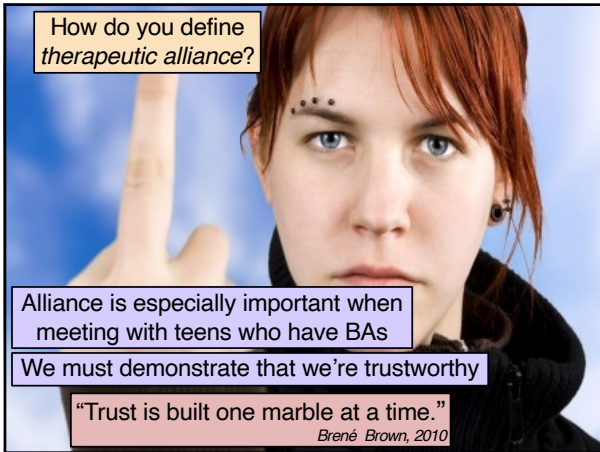
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How do you define *therapeutic alliance*?

Alliance is especially important when meeting with teens who have BAs

We must demonstrate that we're trustworthy

"Trust is built one marble at a time."
Brené Brown, 2010



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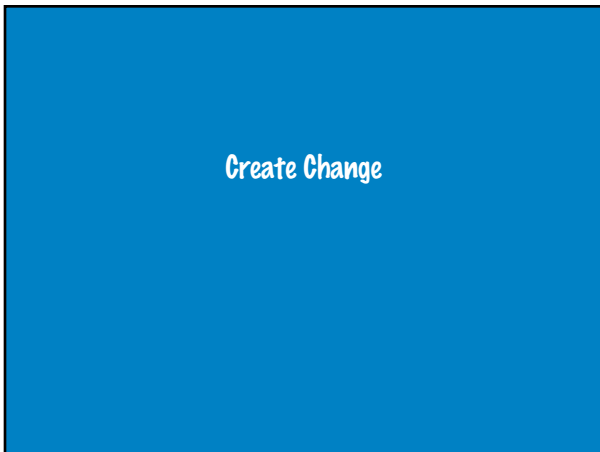
THE MARBLES
 Authentic
 Consistent
 Non-judgmental
 Useful
 Transparent

SMALL GROUPS
 Complete & discuss
Trust Marbles

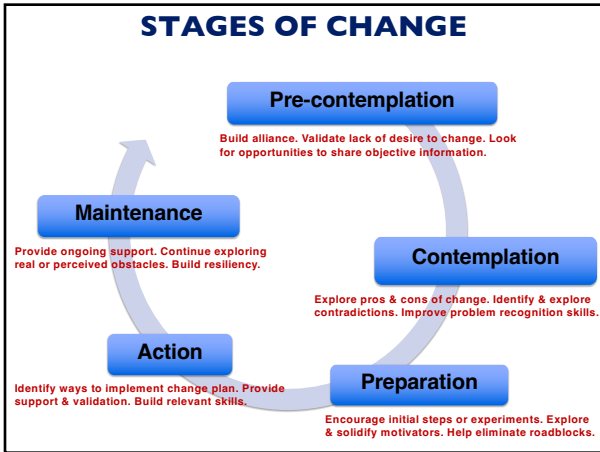


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Create Change



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CHANGE IS A PROCESS

Non-directive, but active, approach
Gently nudge toward next stage

INITIAL NUDGES

- Cultivate therapeutic alliance
- Problem solving vs. problem recognition
- Reframe problem from teen's perspective
- Least bad choice

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EXPECT AMBIVALENCE

Simultaneously believing multiple seemingly contradictory ideas
Indicates Contemplation

RESOLVING AMBIVALENCE

- Normalize, normalize, normalize
- Identify costs & benefits of change
- Disrupt rigid thinking
- Address existential concerns
- Amplify change-talk

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RECYCLE HAPPENS

Recycle & relapse aren't the same

Opportunity to deepen commitment to change

Can result from pushing clients into Action

SMALL GROUPS
Answer and discuss
Revisiting Michael

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Foster Mindfulness

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"Bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment to moment basis."
Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999

ACTIVITIES
Count to 21
Tear A Cat

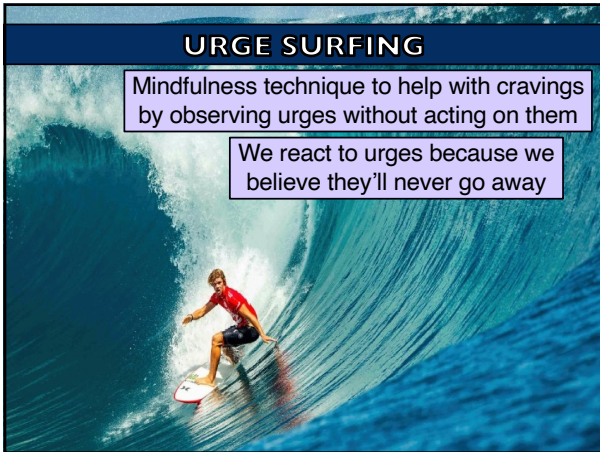
TRAUMA-INFORMED MINDFULNESS
Start with interactive, fun activities that provide immediate feedback & move toward more contemplative

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URGE SURFING

Mindfulness technique to help with cravings by observing urges without acting on them

We react to urges because we believe they'll never go away



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DISTRACT

NOTICE

ACTIVITY
Eat A Jellybean



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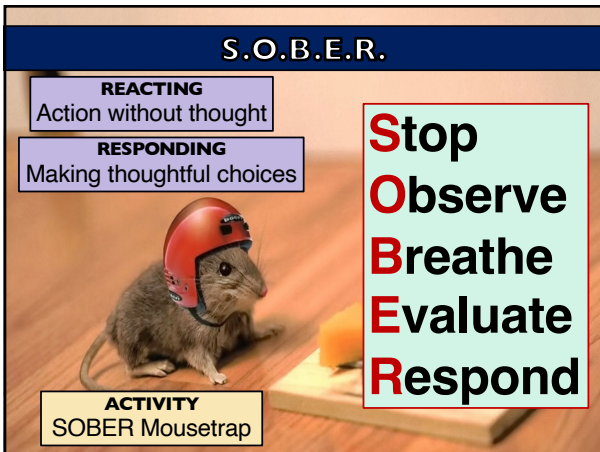
S.O.B.E.R.

REACTING
Action without thought

RESPONDING
Making thoughtful choices

Stop
Observe
Breathe
Evaluate
Respond

ACTIVITY
SOBER Mousetrap



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SOBER SAMPLING

An experiment in not using

THREE STEPS
 Introduce Sober Sampling
 Set length of experiment
 Explore what happened

There are no failures, just useful data

Mindfulness adjacent

More useful if client has basic mindfulness skills & some willingness to change behavior

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Questions or Comments?

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